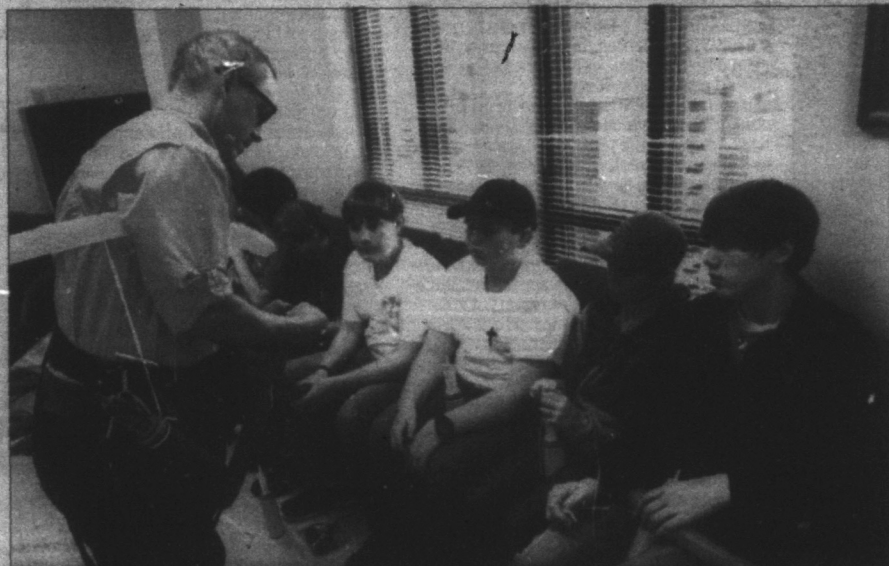


No clowning around



A LITTLE TWIST HERE — Ken Burchfield (left) of Columbus explains the fine points of balloon sculpting to participants at the Mississippi Christian Performing Arts Festival on Feb. 22 at Brandon Church, Brandon. The widespread interest in ballooning means Burchfield, a longtime instructor at the annual event, teaches some of the most well-attended classes at the festival. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Performing arts serious topic for Miss. Baptists

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Anyone who doesn't understand the connection between performing arts and The Great Commission has probably never attended the Mississippi Christian Performing Arts Festival.

So says Ken Hall, organizer of the annual event and consultant in the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

"Christian performing arts can be an integral part of the ministry of churches — and it

is in many Mississippi Baptist churches," Hall points out. "When it's done well, performing arts can have a huge positive impact on the spread of the Gospel."

Doing Christian performing arts well is the reason the festival is held each year. The 2014 gathering offered 28 classes in clowning, 45 classes in puppetry/storytelling, and 64 classes in various other arts including lighting, set design,

see ARTS on p. 9

ERLC: Criminalizing homosexuality not the Christian way

WASHINGTON (BP) — A government that criminalizes homosexual behavior "has overstepped its bounds drastically and unjustly," say two leading Southern Baptist ethicists.

Russell D. Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, and Andrew Walker, director of policy studies for the same entity, wrote in a March 3 essay they remain aligned with the Bible's view of sexuality while also contending homosexuals should not be targeted by the law.

Moore and Walker said they believe what the church has affirmed traditionally and universally, "that sexuality is to be expressed only within the one-flesh union of the marriage of a man to a woman. Anything else is a sin against God. The church has believed this, and will always believe this, because the Bible teaches it."

"At the same time, we believe laws criminalizing homosexual activity to be unjust and an affront to the image of God embedded in all persons," they wrote in the commentary, which was posted at the ERLC's Canon & Culture blog channel.

The comments from Moore and Walker came in the wake of countries criminalizing homosexual activity. Uganda enacted a law Feb. 24 that includes life sentences for people convicted of repeated homosexual

activity and imprisonment for "aiding and abetting" homosexuality, according to a March 7 article by The Christian Science Monitor.

In January, Nigeria approved a similar measure that authorizes 10-year prison sentences for same sex couples observed kissing publicly and people visiting a gay club, the newspaper reported.

The United Nations (UN) reports 78 countries either have laws that criminalize homosexual behavior or have prosecuted lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender people under other laws. Seven regimes, mostly Islamic states in Africa and the Middle East, have authorized capital punishment for homosexual conduct, according to the UN.

Their principal reason for opposing such laws is the Gospel of Jesus, said Moore and Walker, who wrote, "Not everything that is sinful should be a crime."

"Yes, we believe that all sexual activity outside of marriage (defined by Jesus, not by the Supreme Court) is wrong," they said. "We also believe that the answer to this sin is found not in some police state, but in the good news that God

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

The New Mississippians

Just about everyone by now has heard of the incredible amount of oil and gas exploration and production underway in the Dakotas. Commonly referred to as the Bakken boom after the subsurface formation of the same name that may hold more than 24 billion barrels of hydrocarbons, it has resulted in an economic explosion that has nearly swamped the two states.

Unemployment stands at 2.6%. Fast food restaurants are starting employees with little or no work experience at \$15 per hour. An apartment of any appreciable size goes for up to \$4,500 per month. While North Dakota enjoys a budget surplus of a billion dollars each year, the huge population influx is on the verge of overrunning public utilities and government services. Roads, bridges, and sewer systems are barely finished before expansion and reconstruction become necessary. The amount of capital flowing into the area is almost uncountable.

All in all, not bad problems to have — especially if all of that should happen in the poorest state in the nation. What if such an economic windfall befell Mississippi? We'd better get ready. Some people in the know say it's headed our way.

"Dozens of facilities are set to sprout up along the Louisiana and Texas coasts to liquefy natural gas from shale formations as far away as Pennsylvania and Ohio for export around the world," writes reporter Joshua Rhett Miller in a Feb. 23 article on FoxNews.com. "The energy boom, which is turning the U.S. into a net exporter, could drive liquefaction capacity to an eight-fold increase in the next five years alone, experts say. That could mean hundreds of thousands of new jobs along the Gulf Coast, by some estimates."

"Another estimate predicts that the region between Brownsville, Texas, and Pascagoula, Mississippi, could see labor demand surge from 86.1 million required man-hours in 2013 to 134.3 million in 2015, or an increase of more than 55%."

Wow. It doesn't take a geographic genius to understand that last estimate includes the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast — and as the coming boom materializes, our

state will no doubt be radically affected as far north as the Tennessee state line.

"I think you'll have droves of people looking for jobs if they're available," Paul C. Knappenberger, assistant director of the Center for the Study of Science at Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., told Miller. "Where did all the people in the Bakken region come from? They weren't local folks."

Did you catch that? Where did all the people in the Bakken region come from? They weren't local folks.

As governments and businesses in Mississippi make long-range plans for the looming avalanche of workers and their families, what are Mississippi Baptists doing to prepare themselves? The Lord is about to drop in our laps a golden opportunity to advance The Great Commission. What are we going to do about winning and discipling these New Mississippians?

Christians who attempt to witness to people in the South know the frustration that comes along with the fact that just about everyone in the South has heard the Gospel and had at least an opportunity to make a profession of faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Sometimes it seems like non-believers can spot us from a mile away. They know the drill.

Well, our chance is coming to witness to people from other parts of the country and around the world, many of whom have never heard of Jesus and know nothing about the salvation He offers each of us. We're about to plow fresh ground. Are we ready?

Do we have the church staffs and facilities to handle such an influx of population? Are we adequately trained to provide a Gospel presentation to people who have never heard it, or may be hostile to it for a host of reasons? Are we right now raising up a generation of future church leaders who will be ready to face these challenges that will fall mostly to them?

These questions don't scratch the surface of what Mississippi Baptists are about to encounter. We have it on good authority that the fields are white already to harvest (John 4:35). There's no time to waste, now or in the days to come. Let's get busy.

Do you 'feel' the heat?

Once he feels its flame, a child will never doubt the candle's heat. Likewise, the English Reformer William Tyndale once wrote that those who "feel" their faith will stand firm in the truth of Scripture and the promises of God.

Tyndale, convinced that English men and women needed to hear God's Word in their own language, published in 1526 the first English New Testament translated from the Greek text. Throughout the 10 years of ministry that followed he often spoke of "feeling," a term he used in his earliest translation of Romans 5.

In this passage, the Apostle Paul writes that we have peace with God because we are justified by faith. Moreover, by God's grace we have hope. In fact, faith gives us hope even amid tribulation. For this reason, we should rejoice in suffering.

After all, Paul writes, suffering produces perseverance, which produces feeling. At least, feeling is the term that Tyndale used to translate a Greek word, *dokimen*, rendered elsewhere as experience, character, or proven character (Romans 5:1-4).

In a note, Tyndale referred the readers of his translation to James 1:2-3, where a related Greek word, *dokimion*, is used. Here, James calls believers to rejoice amid tribulation, since the "testing [*dokimion*] of your faith" produces perseverance, which itself leads to complete Christian maturity.

Whereas James emphasizes the testing of faith through suffering, Paul in Romans 5 emphasizes the result — that is, the tested, refined, and proven faith (or, perhaps, person of faith). He writes that such feeling, in turn, produces a hope that is assured by God's love, and this love has been poured into the believer's heart by the Holy Spirit and has been displayed by Christ's death for sinners (Romans 5:4-11).

Christians feel their faith, therefore, when refined by the intense heat of suffering, pain, and persecution.

Tyndale wrote in 1528 in his book, *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, "Mark this also, if God send thee to the sea and promise to go with thee and to bring thee safe to land, he will raise up a tempest against thee, to prove whether thou wilt abide by his word, and that thou mayest feel thy faith and perceive his goodness."

Tyndale noted, "For if it were always fair weather and thou never brought into such jeopardy whence his mercy only delivered



Guest opinion

with Benjamin Hawkins

thee, thy faith should be but a presumption and thou shouldst be ever unthankful to God and merciless unto thy neighbor."

He added, "Tribulation for righteousness is not a blessing only, but also a gift that God giveth unto none save his special friends. ... For Paul in the fifth chapter to the Romans saith, 'Tribulation maketh feeling,' that is, it maketh us feel the goodness of God and his help and the working of his Spirit. Lo Christ is never strong in us, till we be weak."

Speakers at the Missouri Baptist Convention's Sowing in Tears conference on Jan. 27-28 translated Tyndale's message into 21st-century English. "You will suffer," said international evangelist Sammy Tippit, who has trained pastors and proclaimed the Gospel in the hardest-to-reach regions of the world.

"This is the missing message in America. ... Suffering is part of the Christian life," Tippit said, but hope only comes, he added, when we are hopeless, when our hope lies only in God.

Suffering strips from us the confidence that we may have in ourselves and in our own resources. It is at that point, when we have nothing to guide us but God's promises that we feel our faith. As Tyndale's better-known contemporary, Martin Luther, once wrote, "But this is the glory of faith, simply not to know: not to know where you are going, not to know what you are doing, not to know what you must suffer, and... to follow the naked voice of God."

By the way, Tyndale ultimately felt his faith in 1536. Latched to a stake, he was strangled and burned because he wanted people to read Scripture for themselves, in their own languages.

As we seek to follow God's call in our lives, would we also risk feeling our faith to scatter God's Word abroad and reach people with the Gospel?

Hawkins is associate editor of *The Pathway* (mbcpathway.com), newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention.

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Situation worsens for Christians in Syria

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. State Department has issued a statement deploring what it calls "continued threats against Christians and other minorities in Syria" from militant Islamists at war with both Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and fellow Islamic militants.

According to a March 3 statement from State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki, the Islamic State of Iraq in the Levant (ISIL) announced last week in Raqqa it will force Christians in the city to "convert to Islam, remain Christian and pay a tax, or face death."

"These outrageous conditions violate universal human rights," Psaki said. "ISIL has demonstrated time and again its disregard for Syrian lives, and it continues to commit atrocities against the Syrian people."

"Although ISIL claims it is fighting the regime, its oppression of and senseless violence against Syrians, including the moderate Syrian opposition, demonstrates that it is fighting for nothing except the imposition of its own brand of tyranny."

The State Department's condemnation of ISIL comes as the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported the group, a branch of al-Qaida also known as ISIS, had given Christians in Raqqa an ultimatum to accept a "dhimma," a protection agreement much like those between mafia families and businesses.

If the agreement was not signed, the villagers would have to convert to Islam or "face the sword."

Haaretz reported Christians in the city had signed the agreement which commits them to a biannual tax of four gold dinars, or about \$500 per person. Those deemed middle class Christians by Islamic clerics are only required to pay half the tax, while those who are poor will be required to pay one quarter of that amount.

The average annual income in Syria is only \$4,800 (US), and likely much less now that civil war has engulfed the country. That means many Christians will be unable to pay the tax and will be forced into conversion — or worse.

Restrictions imposed

In addition to being required to practice Christianity behind closed doors, Christians in Raqqa must now follow 11 other conditions in order to keep the agreement with their Muslim overlords. Among those conditions are prohibitions on building new sanctuaries or restoring those damaged in the civil war, aiding any faction or government opposed to ISIL, and discouraging conversions to Islam from within the Christian community, according to the Israeli newspaper.

The dhimma is a type of agreement that has existed in Islam since the mid-seventh century. The opportunity to pay the tax, or "jizya," for protection was offered to Christians and Jews during the Islamic conquests because Islam's founder, Muhammad, regarded Christians and Jews as "people of the Book," partly because Islam claimed Abraham, Moses, and Jesus as prophets and partly because the religion's founder believed Christians and Jews living among Muslims would seek conversion in order to stop paying the tax.

Under such an agreement, dhimmis



TOO LATE FOR AHMED — Relatives of four-day-old Ahmed prepare his body for burial in the Syrian village of Arhef earlier this year. Ahmed developed respiratory complications shortly after birth, but due to the civil war and other problems in the country his parents were unable to secure medical care. (Photo courtesy of UNICEF)

were and still are considered defeated and humbled foes of Islam.

In the Koran (Surah 9:29), followers of Islam are instructed to "fight those who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and his messenger have declared unlawful — those who do not practice the religion of truth though they were given the Book — until they pay the tribute willingly and have been humbled."

Muslims, according to Islamic teaching, are required to protect the lives and property of dhimmis, but they can be killed without trial if they violate the agreement.

Psaki said in her statement the dhimma between the ISIL and Christians in Raqqa is a departure from the "long history of tolerance and co-existence" between Muslims and Christians in Syria. She also said Christians were not faring any better under the assault of the Assad regime.

"Both the regime and ISIL are fueling sectarian strife to justify their brutality. We strongly condemn these abuses and urge all parties to protect and respect the rights of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or religion," Psaki said.

Caught between

Raqqa, however, is not the first Christian settlement to be subjected to mistreatment by Islamic militants when caught between rebels and the Assad regime. In fact, it is not the first time ISIL has forced Christians to make a decision between faith, property, or life.

In March 2013, nearly two years into the Syrian uprising prompted by the so-called "Arab Spring," the town of Yacoubiyeh, comprised of nearly 2,500 Christian residents, was subjected to the same treatment.

The commander of militant Islamist forces there said he would implement Islamic law, forcing Christians into a type of second class citizenry.

The rebel commander, using the pseudonym Hakim, said Christians could practice their freedoms, but in private. "Personal freedom stops where the freedom of others begins," Hakim told the Associated Press.

The Christians in Yacoubiyeh who could flee have left, and militants moved on to capture the villages of Jeddida and Quniya, home to thousands of other Christians. Those who remained met with Islamic clerics and expressed their desire to avoid the status of dhimmi.

The Lebanese Daily Star reported that Muslim clerics noted the absence of a legitimate government as a reason for the "service" provided by Islamic courts practicing Sharia law, to which the Christians would be subject.

Back and forth

The specter of ill treatment under Sharia law has caused many Christians, at first sympathetic with the rebels, to again support the Assad regime. In fact, several Assadist strongholds are among the ancient Christian communities that have been attacked by jihadists.

In September 2013, for instance, rebels comprised mainly of militant Islamists attacked the ancient town of Maaloula, the last town on earth where ancient Aramaic is the primary language. Jihadist fighters overran a Christian monastery in the town but did not harm the few remaining nuns there.

They stated they were looking only to cleanse the town of supporters of the Assad regime.

However, churches in Maaloula were reportedly destroyed and Christian rel-

ics smashed in the fighting. Rebels also executed more than 20 people in the town square, many of them reportedly Christians loyal to the Assad regime.

News organizations such as Arutz Sheva, a national Israeli news agency, said the attack on Maaloula was led by the al-Nusra front of al-Qaida. It is this group, taking direction from al-Qaida's spiritual leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, which is in a battle of its own with ISIL.

Al-Nusra has accused ISIL leaders of assassinating some of its leaders to gain greater control over the Islamist revolution.

"The paradoxical result is that the al-Qaida stand-in — Al-Nusra — is now considered a more desirable ally of the rebels than ISIS because it relies largely on Syrian support, while ISIS [ISIL] has recruited many volunteers from Arab and Western countries," Haaretz reported.

"Al-Nusra has also been 'kinder' to civilians. True, the group's militants decapitated civilians suspected of supporting the Syrian regime, but it also is better at keeping order and maintaining the food supply to the civilians under its control."

"In addition, Al-Nusra and the Islamic Front — an umbrella organization for several Islamist groups — are currently cooperating in an effort to create a united front against ISIS [ISIL]."

Muslim Infighting

According to Haaretz, al-Zawahiri, who assumed command of al-Qaida after the death of Osama bin Laden, told ISIL to stop resisting al-Qaida's leadership or it would face "a dreadful battle."

Fighting between the two groups, which has left Christians with little options in a three-way struggle between Assad, al-Qaida's al-Nusra, and ISIL, reportedly has resulted in 3,000 deaths.

The pushback from al-Nusra also reportedly forced ISIL to hole up in Raqqa, where the dhimma agreement was signed.

In December 2013, political leaders in neighboring Lebanon denounced the first attacks on Christian sites in Syria, in particular the Church of the Annunciation and Martyrs in Raqqa.

Amine Gemayel, who was president of Lebanon during its own civil war from 1982-88 and is now head of the Kataeb Party largely comprised of Maronite Catholics, said the attacks "show the irresponsibility and ignorance of those who committed these crimes."

Gemayel called for militants to respect the freedom of those from other civilizations and religions.

According to CNN, ISIL's agreement with the Christians of Raqqa has since come under fire from other radical clerics as well. Louay Safi, spokesman for the Syrian Coalition fighting the Assad regime, said the group's treatment of non-Muslims was "un-Islamic."

The radical cleric Abu Qatada, who is standing trial in Jordan for terrorism, told CNN the militants could not currently impose such an agreement on Christians because they were not yet "empowered to govern Syria."

Presumably then, whichever branch of Islamic militants completes its conquest of the nation could then force Christians to submit as dhimmis.

Regardless of where you are going, it is always good to travel with some kids in the car with you. In addition to keeping you awake as you travel, they will keep you alert as to where you are in relationship to your destination. I can remember as a child anytime that we would go somewhere the question was asked almost before we got out of the driveway. Usually it was not me asking because I had brothers who would beat me to the punch and ask the most pressing issue of the trip. Are we there yet? Then later my children asked the same question. Now my grandkids ask, are we there yet? The destination is not really important, but for them and for some of us it is the duration.

There are two things that seem to concern all of us. One is time and the other is miles. I do not know of anyone who from time to time has not struggled with time. Sometimes it is not having enough of it or maybe at other times it is having too much of it as we have to wait on something with a degree of patience. The other measuring device is miles. It does not come into play as often, but it is always important. Whether you are traveling somewhere to see relatives, or going to a vacation destination, or going to a ballgame or to some special event, we all have a sense of how much further we have to go.

The folks who build our highways all over our state and country are mindful of this as they post signs all along the way indicating how much further it is to a particular city. On many of our roads they have signs along the way with mile markers where you can keep up with every 5,280 feet that you pass, as you live through how much further you have to go moment by moment and mile by mile. This keeps you alert, so that you can answer the question, are we there yet.

On this journey of life, we cover a lot of miles over a period of days and decades. Some cover more than others, but the fact is that we are all on the move. And one day we will conclude this journey and be at our final destination, eternity. Some will come to the end of the journey to be with the Lord forever. Others will conclude life's journey and will begin separation from God forever. Nobody knows when they are on the last mile.



Are We There Yet?

Take a moment and think about your travel. Every one of us is traveling at different speeds and in different directions. There are probably some people today who will travel hundreds of miles in their work or just to go to a destination of rest and relaxation. Others of us will travel very short distances that may involve the difficulty of just getting out of bed and taking a few steps to a chair or to sit up and eat a bite. Some may go overseas and others may only sit by the window and look out at what is taking place. But all of us at some point whether traveling 70 miles an hour down an interstate or shuffling our feet across the floor will eventually come to the last mile of the journey.

Some come to that last mile while they are still in the youthful stages of life. Others come to the final mile after traveling many decades and covering hundreds of thousands of miles. But eventually all of us travel the last mile and arrive at our final destination. Sometimes when I am flying as the plane is about to land the announcement is made that this is the final destination of the aircraft meaning that it is not going to stop here and let some people off and some people will board and the plane will continue to another place. It is the last stop, and one day that will be so for all of us.

As you travel life's journey, don't just consider the travel but pay attention to the teachers along the way. I do not mean teachers like those standing in a classroom giving information. I am talking about those

signs along the way that can teach you and give you information letting you know how much further you need to travel. Some of the signs on life's roadway point out dangers or new directions that you need to consider. Sometimes it is not too difficult to figure out how far you have traveled. At other times it may be more difficult to realize how far you have to go and you never know when you are on that last mile.

Clearly, from a biblical standpoint and a spiritual insight, God does have sounds and signs along the way to let you know that you may be on the last mile. You need to pay attention. Older folks begin to realize some things that helped them to get down the road of life are not working as well now. Their muscles are not as strong, the heart is not as regular, eyes may be dimming, and the mind may not be as sharp as it once was. These are teachers trying to help you understand that though you may have traveled a million miles, you are getting closer to the last mile. Even when those tragic events hit and happen that are so unexpected, unannounced and life is over, regardless of what the person's age, there were teachers whether they or we paid any attention. They were God's teachers trying to get our attention and trying to alert us or maybe alarm us to be ready. And yet so many, young and old alike, pay no attention.

The sign may be in the form of a person. It could be a parent, a pastor, a Sunday School teacher, or a grandparent who lovingly tries to point out to us that life is brief, time is short and the

last mile comes quicker than you think. Have you been aware of the teachers around you warning you much like God Himself did in Amos 4:12? He said, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." He no doubt has personalized the warning for you and me.

A final thought about this journey called life and its travels and teachers are the temptations that may influence you. Although no one knows when they are traveling their last mile, the temptation is to ignore that there is a last mile, to not pay attention and not be prepared when you come to the end of the road. For all of us, the temptation is to think that there are thousands of miles left for us to travel. You think that you have plenty of time and space to prepare for eternity which is the most important thing in life. Nothing, absolutely nothing supersedes the importance of knowing Christ as your Savior.

The Scripture says in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." That names that saves, the person who gives us life, the One we must know in order to have eternal life with the Father is Jesus. Do you know Him? You may have heard a thousand sermons. You may have traveled a million miles. You may have thought about trusting Christ hundreds of times, but you have not done it. Let's just suppose you are traveling the last mile of your life. Why not give your life to Christ this very moment of this day? Trust Him as Lord and Savior.

As you travel, God has given you this moment, one more grand opportunity to turn from your sins and trust the Savior. He will give you life now and life everlasting. You may have passed up thousands of opportunities to do that but capture this one today and simply stop and pray something like this. Lord Jesus, I believe you died for my sins. I turn from my sins to you and ask you to save me right now. Whenever the answer comes to the question that we sometimes hear, are we there yet, and the answer is yes, you will know that you are prepared for that moment.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Insight: Why people keep going to movies, even bad ones

Movies are said to be an art form. It follows then, that the art of storytelling is most effective not just when it shows who we are, but when it suggests what we can become. Many of this year's Oscar contenders seem to ignore that challenge.

The razzle-dazzle 86th Academy Awards ceremony, naming 12 Years a Slave the best film of the year, paraded before viewers a list of movies with abusive content.

The technical and artistic qualities of the nominees cannot be debated. Indeed, it must have been difficult to select one nominee over another when it came to the skill and technique represented in each category.

Whatever positive messages may be contained in Oscar's choices, their themes were eclipsed by desensitizing content. Content is never considered when Hollywood passes out little golden statues, but cinematic content has become as influential as its artistic merits.

While some of the films

offered a moral or life lesson (Gravity, Captain Phillips, Saving Mr. Banks), far too many took moviegoers down a dark road. Six of the Best Picture nominees were deservedly rated R.

How The Wolf of Wall Street and Dallas Buyers Club escaped the seldom used NC-17 mystifies this film reviewer.

Movies are said to be an art form. It follows then, that the art of storytelling is most effective not just when it shows who we are, but when it suggests what we can become. Many of this year's Oscar contenders seem to ignore that challenge. What exactly is the moral of August: Osage County or American Hustle?

Why does this humble movie correspondent continue to subject himself to such grievous film-going experiences? Don't think I don't ask that of myself about this time each year. My answer: Movies are modern man's medium for relating parables to the masses.



BOATWRIGHT

Like parables, films can teach and uplift as well as entertain. Like every other film buff, I'm always hoping for the next Friendly Persuasion, To Kill a Mockingbird, or It's a Wonderful Life.

Sadly, films that uplift the spirit as well as entertain are few and far between. So many of this year's nominees seem

to not just reflect our nation's decaying moral standards, but embrace them.

If you are troubled by the crudity and profane nature of many films Hollywood considers "art," then you really should read the critiques of those of us who provide the reasons for the ratings. A review is just an opinion, but the synopsis and the film's content should help you when deciding what's appropriate for your family's viewing.

Boatwright, of Kansas City, Kan., reviews films for pre-viewonline.org and is a regular contributor to The World and Everything In It, a weekly radio program from WORLD News Group. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.



HOPEFUL — As another government in Egypt steps down, Christians hope the quiet transition is a sign of peace on the horizon for a country characterized by widespread, violent turmoil and Christian persecution since 2011. (IMB file photo)

Christians uneasy but optimistic about peaceful future in Egypt

CAIRO, Egypt (BP) — When Egypt's government abruptly stepped down Feb. 24, the action made only small ripples in a nation now accustomed to major political upheaval.

Army chief Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who is expected to run for president in the coming election, quietly resigned from power and new prime minister Ibrahim Mehliab stepped in, reinstating Sisi as defense minister.

The quiet change mirrored Christians' cautious hope for the future, that they might trade the revolutionary change promised by the Arab Spring for the peaceful lives they lived before, said Courtney Dobson (not her real name), a Baptist worker who serves in the area.

"As the Arab Spring revolution started in 2011, Christians were hopeful that a new day of freedom was dawning," Dobson said.

At that time, Egyptians spilled out of mosques and churches alike to rally around issues such as jobs and food that transcended religious barriers. Christians were "guardedly optimistic" that the change would bring freer lives and pave the way to share the Gospel more openly, one Christian worker said.

After the nearly 30-year regime of President Hosni Mubarak fell, however, things took a different turn.

A narrow majority elected Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi president in 2012, and he "began to gather to himself unrestricted power," Michael H. Edens, professor of theology and Islamic studies at

"Pray for us as a church that we will be like salt in the community and try to wake people up to come to Christ. This is the time for our sister churches outside of Egypt to pray for us. This is our time. This is our chance."

Mounir Malaty
pastor of Baptist Church
in Egypt

New Orleans Seminary, wrote in a column for Baptist Press.

Morsi "hurriedly formed a constitutional revision committee devoid of non-Islamist input and drafted a pro-Islamic constitution." He also tightened his grip on things like freedom of expression and by the end of June last year, many realized Morsi was destined to become another dictator, Edens said.

Protestors worked themselves back into a frenzy and after tremendous bloodshed, Morsi was forced out July 3 by military force headed up by Sisi.

The public cheered, but Christians faced an escalating battle with open attacks on Christians and churches. The violence, touted as revenge on Christians for ousting a Muslim Brotherhood leader, saw more than 75 churches across the country attacked, looted, burned, or destroyed by the end of the week that Morsi was removed from power.

The attacks continued into August, with Beni Mazar Church

in Minya and other churches set on fire Aug. 14.

Without God, "it is still dark" in Egypt, said Mounir Malaty, pastor of another Baptist Church in Egypt and a graduate of New Orleans Seminary.

"Pray for us as a church that we will be like salt in the community and try to wake people up to come to Christ," Malaty said. "This is the time for our sister churches outside of Egypt to pray for us. This is our time. This is our chance."

Pastors across the country asked for urgent prayer for peace, and slowly things have settled down. Dobson said the fragile calm is reminiscent of the old days for Christians. Many hope the quiet step-down of Sisi, which many say sets him up to run for president in the next election, is an indicator that peace and stability are on the horizon.

"Three years on [from the start of the Arab Spring], people seem to be resigned to resuming their old patterns of life and maybe even hopeful to return to a more predictable response from those who oppose them," she said.

Dobson said she has seen an uptick in the number of Christians determined to share their faith regardless of the circumstances. "Christians in the West can pray that believers here would be willing to take risks to share their faith."

"Pray that the Christian community here will be marked by love, especially when they face hostility. Pray that Egypt would become a place where people are free to choose their own beliefs without facing persecution for doing so."

Nater follows God's roadshow, plants churches along way

CAMBRIDGE, Md. (BP) — A typical Sunday for Jose Nater looks anything but typical. As church planter and pastor of not one, not two, but three Spanish-language church plants on the eastern shore of Maryland, Nater and his family spend their Sundays on the road.

The mornings begin early in Cambridge, Md., as Nater, along with his wife Myra teaches Sunday School classes, prepares music for praise and worship, and leads the morning's service at First Hispanic Church of Cambridge.

As Sunday services close in Cambridge, the family packs up, grabs a quick lunch, and makes the 20-mile drive to the nearby city of Easton, Md., where Nater delivers his second sermon of the day — this one at First Hispanic Church of Easton, also a Spanish-language church planted by Nater.

After another quick meal they are on the road again, this time crossing into Delaware where Nater hosts Bible classes before beginning his third church service of the day for the Hispanic community in the city of Seaford.

By the time the family makes it back home, Nater and his wife have just enough time to get to bed before Monday morning comes and takes them both back to their full-time jobs. He works at a local property management company, and she is the director of an after-school program.

For many people, the grind of a full-time job, the needs of a family, and the demands of pastoring three church plants in two states might be too much, but for Nater it's a calling.

"I have a family, a job and three congregations to pastor. It's a full plate but I know God is the one who has filled my plate with this work, who called me to these communities and these people. He is the one who sustains me through it."

Nater is one of six missionaries featured this year in the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) 2014 promotion of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®. The church plants he pastors are part of NAMB's effort to help Southern Baptists start 15,000 new churches in 10 years. Half of NAMB's financial support comes from the Annie offering.

The hectic life of a bivocational church planter is not what Nater or his family had in mind when they moved to the United States from Puerto Rico in 2002. At the time, he was working for a prominent hotel chain and, with a transfer to Maryland to open a new location, was quickly climbing the corporate ladder.

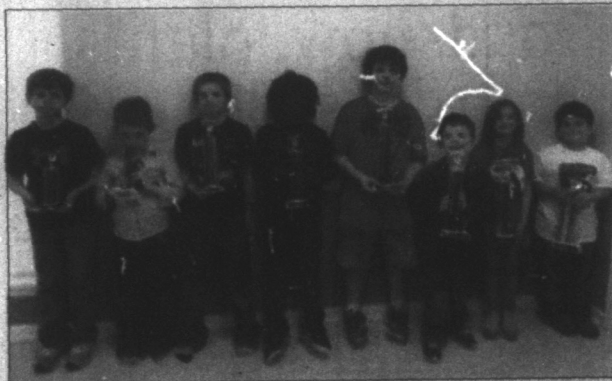
Just months after moving his family and taking the new position, Nater was unexpectedly let go from the company. "It was such a difficult time," Nater recalls. "We didn't see it coming and didn't know what to do. We considered leaving the area, but something in my heart said, 'This is where you're supposed to be.'"

The family remained in Maryland despite their unexpected hardships. Soon after losing his job, the family of four lost their home as well, moving into a friend's basement. Nater took several part-time jobs and worked around the clock to keep his family from completely going under financially.



IN THE NAME OF JESUS — North American Mission Board missionary Jose Nater (left) prays with new church members during services at First Hispanic Church of Cambridge, Md. (NAMB photo)

Just for the Record



The **PEARL RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION'S** RA Race Day was conducted on February 15 with 70 attending from 4 churches. Trophies were given to the following participants, from left: Vance Culpepper - 3rd Place Lad; Johnny Lily - 3rd Place Crusader; Tyler Jackson - 2nd Place Crusader; Justin Davis - 2nd Place Lad; Juan Flores - 1st Place Crusader; Joshua Lilly - 1st Place Lad; Summer Hunt - Best Sportsmanship; Justin Schieler - Best in Show.

ROSELAND PARK CHURCH, PICAYUNE,

recently ordained two new deacons. Shown are youth pastor Chris Litton, associate pastor Brad Replogle, Ray Gaddy (age 82, deacon), Lou Landrum (age 88, deacon), interim pastor Don H. Stewart, and music/administration pastor Marty Stone.



MT. OLIVET CHURCH, SCOTT COUNTY, recently hosted a Children's Ministry/GA Day, celebrating the 100 year birthday of GAs. Gary Wyatt, guest speaker, shared about his missionary trip to Malaysia.



The Brotherhood of **CONCORD CHURCH, BENTON-TIPPAH ASSOCIATION,** selected Jerry Mauney as Man of the Year. President Lyle Bullock presented the plaque on Baptist Men's Day Jan. 26. Shown are Mauney and Bullock.

Revivals & Homecomings

Rocky Mount Church, Calhoun Association: Revival, Mar. 16-19; Sun., 6:30 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Ben Yarber, speaker; Susie Haggard, music; Larry W. Haggard, pastor.

Correction

The date for the upcoming Senior Adult Rally at First Church, Tupelo, was incorrect in the March 6 edition of Housetops in The Baptist Record. The correct date is March 31. For more information, contact Glenn Shows in the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board at (601) 292-3373. E-mail: gshows@mbcb.org.



MISSISSIPPI WMU SEEKING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER

DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

The Executive Director-Treasurer of Woman's Missionary Union is responsible for promoting, planning, conducting and evaluating the missions mobilization, missions awareness, missions education, missions support and missions involvement among women, youth, girls, preschoolers and co-ed groups in Mississippi Baptist churches and associations throughout the state.

SPECIFICATIONS

Education: College: 4 years; Seminary: 2 to 3 years
Experience: Church/Denomination: 5 to 10 years

RESUMES SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:

WMU Search Committee, Marion D. Duncan, Chairman,
277 Cambridge Drive, Starkville, MS 39759

RESUMES WILL BE RECEIVED UNTIL APRIL 30, 2014

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Mr. Michael Gilliam at 601-313-6862

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Just for the Record



Youth from **MT. PISGAH CHURCH, CARROLLTON**, attended Winter Jam Fest in Tupelo. Lanny Haley, pastor.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, MYRTLE, hosted Renewing Your Passion Week Feb. 23-26 with Jamie Johnson, Crossfire Ministries. He spoke in public schools each morning (75 decisions) and at the church each evening. The event included a county-wide youth rally with 350-400 people from 18 different churches, with 91 decisions. Shown are pastor Freddy Johnson and Jamie Johnson.



GRENADA CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S JOB CORPS held its first graduation celebration Nov. 14, 2013. Shown are graduates Rosie L. Wilson, Betty Jean Ross, Dean Rodgers, Patricia Bulling, and Mary C. Brown. Second session of classes began February 4.

Twenty-three women and children of the Women's Ministry group of **TRINITY CHURCH, AMORY**, attended their annual Christmas party at Longhorn Steakhouse, where they revealed their secret pals for the year.



BIG LEVEL CHURCH, WIGGINS, recently held a note burning ceremony, having paid off the loan for a recent church addition.



Over 50 adults and children attended the **RANKIN COUNTY WMU** sponsored senior luncheon at **LIBERTY CHURCH, FLOWOOD**, Feb. 15. Adults, RAs, GAs, and CAs from six Rankin County Baptist churches fellowshiped, played games, had their pictures taken, received door prizes, and enjoyed a meal prepared by the cooks and kitchen volunteers of Liberty Church.

Biblical Counseling Conference

Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, April 7-9, 2014

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Speakers



Schedule

WEDNESDAY - MARCH - 26TH 2014

6:30 pm Gerald Harris, Kara Blackard, Greater Vision

THURSDAY - MARCH - 27TH 2014

10:00 am Bob Pittman, Junior Hill

1:45 pm Bob Pittman

6:30 pm Mike Huckabee, Derwin Hinson

FRIDAY - MARCH - 28TH 2014

10:00 am Rick Coram, Don Savell

1:45 pm Larry Brown

6:30 pm H.B. Charles, Collingsworth Family

Music



Hotels

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March 26-28, 2014

Evangelism Conf. slated March 26-28 at Wheeler Grove Church

CORINTH, Ms. (Special) — Wheeler Grove Church, Alcorn Association, is hosting a Bailey Smith Real Evangelism Conference on March 26-28. Preaching during these services will be:

■ Gerald Harris, editor of The Christian Index, news journal of the Georgia Baptist Convention in Duluth, Ga. Harris is a former Mississippi Baptist pastor.

■ Kara Blackard, pastor of Wheeler Grove Church.

■ Evangelist Bob Pittman of Bob Pittman Ministries in Muscle Shoals, AL.

■ Evangelist Junior Hill of Junior Hill Ministries in Hartselle, AL.

■ Mike Huckabee, FoxNews host and commentator, former governor of Arkansas, and former Arkansas Baptist pastor.

■ Evangelist Rick Coram of Rick Coram Ministries in Jacksonville, FL.

■ Evangelist Don Savell of Wall of Grace Ministries in McKenzie, TN.

■ Larry Brown, staff evangelist at Marion Avenue Church in Washington, Iowa.

■ H.B. Charles, primary preacher-teacher at

Shiloh Metropolitan Church in Jacksonville, FL.

Singers will include the Mike Speck Trio of Lebanon, TN, Greater Vision of Morristown, TN, Collingsworth Family of New Richmond, Oh., and Derwin Hinson of Wilmington, N.C.

"Each March our church hosts the Bailey Smith Real Evangelism Conference, which is attended by individuals and groups from across the nation," said Blackard on the church's web site. "This conference has proven to be a much needed 'time of refreshing' for God's people."

"Each year the program is filled with some of the most gifted preachers, musicians, and singers across America. Someone said, 'It's like getting a fresh drink from the old well!'"

Night services start at 6:30 p.m. Morning & afternoon services begin at 10 a.m. and 1:45 p.m. on Thursday and Friday. There will be choirs singing each night. Meals will be provided at no cost on Thursday and Friday after the morning services and before the evening services.

For more information, visit wheelergrovebaptist.com or call (662) 287-2864.

BIBL i O C i P H E R

TR NTEN TENT EH RED, ARN TSU

TEED OTEN NTR WKSDSN WESNT

GHNQ NTR BTGDBTRW; NQ TSU NTEN

QPRDBQURNT OSAA S CSPK NQ REN QJ

NTR NDRR QJ ASJR, OTSBT SW SH NTR

USLWN QJ NTR KEDELSWR QJ CQL.

DRPRAENSQH NOQ: WRPRH

Clue: U = M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 2:7

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004. © 2005

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.

(I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

OBITUARY

Homer Allen Worsham passed away December 30, 2013 at the Methodist Hospital in Germantown, Tennessee. Worsham was born in Grenada, Mississippi, December 27, 1932. Prior to his ordination, he was a member of Emmanuel Church in Grenada, where he surrendered to the ministry. While a student, he served Stratton Church, where he was ordained. He was the husband of Dorothy Kate Wilson, whom he married June 18, 1954. Worsham attended Clarke College where he received his A.A. degree in 1958. He later graduated from Mississippi College where he received his B.A. degree. He furthered

his education by studying at Luther Rice Seminary. Worsham pastored Red Banks Church from 1960-1964. He was called to Calvary Church in Newton, Mississippi from 1964-1968. He returned to Red Banks Church where he pastored until 1991. He then became interim pastor at Calvary Church in Batesville, Mississippi for one year. Other interims include Salem Church, Potts Camp, Mississippi and Flag Lake Church in Senatobia, Mississippi. He leaves his wife, Kate, and two sons, Daniel Allen Worsham (Charlotte), and David Mark Worsham (Tammie), six grandchildren, and ten great grandchildren.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, MT. OLIVE, AL. IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR. Master of Divinity preferred; 5-10 years' experience as Pastor at a Southern Baptist Church. Please submit resumes by mail to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 3200 Mt. Olive Road, Mt. Olive, AL 35117. OR e-mail resumes to: Sheila@fbcmo.org

GATLINBURG RENTALS: Cabin \$95/night and Condo \$75/night. Contact: 632 922 0401 or E-mail: pdw4760@aol.net for information and booking.

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MS POSITIONS

ENON BAPTIST CHURCH IN GRENADA, MS IS PRAYERFULLY SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please send resumes to Enon Baptist Church, 2604 Carrollton Rd., Grenada, MS 38901. Attn: Pastor Search Committee or e-mail enonbaptistchurch@outlook.com. For questions call 662-226-0778. Please leave message if no answer.

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, HATTIESBURG IS CURRENTLY SEEKING A FULL TIME MINISTER OF STUDENTS AND EDUCATION. Interested candidates should email resumes with references to calvaryog-search@gmail.com.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF OCEAN SPRINGS, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME MINISTER OF PRESCHOOL AND CHILDREN. Please send resumes and/or inquiries to 602 Washington Avenue, Ocean Springs, MS 39564 or via email to fbos@fbos.org. Resumes will be accepted through March 31, 2014.

EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH OF GREENVILLE, MS IS IN SEARCH OF A FULL TIME CHILDREN'S PASTOR. Please send resumes to Emmanuel Baptist Church, Attn: Tommy Burford, 3600 Glendale Rd, Greenville, MS 38704 or email to tb_bird-legs@yahoo.com

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF RUNNELSTOWN IN PETAL, MS IS PRAYERFULLY SEEKING A FULL TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to First Baptist Church of Runnelstown, C/O Pastor Search Committee, 9211 Highway 42, Petal, MS 39465.

YOUTH MINISTER-WILDWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH IN CLINTON, MS. Please mail resumes to Wildwood Baptist Church, 101 Auburn Dr., Clinton, MS 39056 or email to wbbc@comcast.net.

BECKER BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A YEAR ROUND BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER. Please send resumes to: Becker Baptist Church, Youth Search Committee, P. O. Box 83, Becker, MS 38825.

DREW BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR OR A SEMI-RETIRED PASTOR. Please send resumes to Pastor Search Committee, 371 Shelby Dr., Drew, MS 38737.

ROSE HILL FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please send resumes to 2137 CR. 372 Enterprise, MS 39330 or email: dusty73@gmail.com

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, SHANNON (LEE COUNTY), MS IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR. Send resumes to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 21, Shannon, Ms. 38868

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN KOSCIUSKO, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER. Please send resume to First Baptist Church, Attn.: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 70, Kosciusko, MS 39090.

ARTS

cont. from p. 1

improvisation, dinner theater, and smaller church performances.

Electronic media and recreation were also represented, along with special effects, singing technique, and using the Bible to write scripts. More than 30 faculty members served as instructors for the numerous performing arts.

"The Mississippi Christian Performing Arts Festival, I believe, is especially important to smaller churches with an active performing arts ministry, who cannot afford to bring in contractors for instruction, lighting, sound systems, and other components of the ministry," Hall points out.

Marcus Peagler, discipleship and family ministry director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, recalls the history of the festival.

"Discipleship and Family Ministry initially connected with Christian performing arts as a venue to assist churches in the area of church recreation. Not only were we able to assist recreators with church ministry, the event grew to assist in clowning, drama, puppets, media, creative worship, and creative movement."

"It is now an event for artists, teachers, groups, ministry teams, and others to come and sharpen or learn new skills to enhance the total ministry of the local church."

Hall says well-trained Christian performance artists have taken their talents outside churches to reach people for the Gospel on far-flung mission trips, and at local events such as sale days, flea markets, civic celebrations, parades, festivals, school meetings, and other gatherings.

The 2015 Mississippi Christian Performing Arts Festival will be held Feb. 27-28. The location has not yet been announced.

Those interested in future Christian Performing Arts Festival activities can visit msepaf.weebly.com. To be included on the festival mailing list, contact Rene Edwards at redwards@mbcb.org. Hall can be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3286 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 286. E-mail: khal@mbcb.org.

The Mississippi Christian Performing Arts Festival is funded by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

Staff Changes

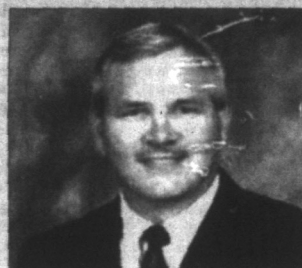


FIRST CHURCH, BAY ST. LOUIS has recently called Owen Nease as Senior Pastor. Nease comes to Bay St. Louis from New Orleans Seminary where he was serving as Director of Financial Aid. He is married to the former Amanda Weeks, and they have 3 children.



LIBERTY CHURCH, LIBERTY, has called Matthew Gazaway as their minister of students. Shown are Gazaway and his wife Nichole.

College News



LaRue Stephens of Biloxi, senior pastor at First Church of Long Beach, will serve as chair of the **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** Board of Trustees for 2014. Dr. Stephens served as an adjunct professor of religion at WCU for seven years and previously served on the Board of Trustees.

In other College News:

► **William Carey University's** School of Education will host the ninth annual Young Authors Celebration (YAC) on March 7, from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. There will be 393 students from eight area elementary schools at the event, along with their teachers and parents. The keynote speaker this year is Vaughn Wilson of Vaughn Wilson Photography. Other special guest speakers include Rick Anderson of Clinton, Fluor Bradley of Biloxi, Kym Garraway Braley of Hattiesburg, Read Diket from WCU, Ginny Kemp of Columbia, Jean Sauls of Columbia, and Diane Williams of Jackson. Scot Jones of Hattiesburg, a local "magician," will entertain the students as they arrive.

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

DECEMBER 2013

HONORS

Ms. Dianne Carruth
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Phillip, Megan & Laerke Holm Chapman
Candy & Ken Anderson
Robert, Megan & Charlotte Chapman
Candy & Ken Anderson
Stephini & Chuck Chapman
Candy & Ken Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. James Clark
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Mr. & Mrs. James E. Clark
Mrs. Sue Hamilton
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy D. Clark
Nancy & Ron Craddock
Mrs. Maureen Clark
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Mrs. Patty Clark, Children's Director
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Ray & Peggy Cothran
Cecil & Penny Washington
Mr. & Mrs. Ron Craddock
Mrs. Sue Hamilton
Ms. Cindy Crain
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry C. Thomas
Ms. Tonya Critten
Mr. Jeff Bryan
Hines & Ella Cronin
Cecil & Penny Washington
Mr. Jason Crowder
Mr. Jeff Bryan
Mr. & Mrs. John J. Dale
Mr. & Mrs. Robert D. Parman
Mr. & Mrs. C. T. Danna
Johnny & Carolyn Hobbs
Mr. & Mrs. John Hobbs
Cecil & Penny Washington
Mrs. Sarah Davis
Mr. & Mrs. R. N. Humphreys

Rev. & Mrs. Sterling Davis
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Poag
Mrs. Cherry Denson
Mrs. Catherine S. Ferguson
Mr. & Mrs. Will Dodds
Mr. & Mrs. Johnnie A. Hudson
Mr. Andy Donahoe
Mr. & Mrs. Danny L. Moore
Mr. & Mrs. Bobby Douglas
Mr. & Mrs. John Hobbs
Dr. John & Patsy Douglas
Dr. & Mrs. Jay Douglas
Mrs. Patricia Duckworth
Ms. Diane Long
Mr. Howard Duer
Mr. Douglas N. Allen
10:30 Class & Annette Dunaway
Ms. Ruth P. Pansano and Pat Jeanne & Jess Eavenson
Mrs. Kathleen Milford
Jo and Bobby Fairburn
Mrs. Virginia H. Atherton
Ms. Marty Farmer
Mr. Jeff Bryan
Ms. Bettie Fazende
Mr. & Mrs. Sid Hays
FBC McComb Staff
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Mr. Billy Joe Ferguson
Walker & Woods Mitchell
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Ms. Cindy C. Fish
Ms. Ann Ford
Mr. Jeff Bryan
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Mr. & Mrs. John Hobbs
Dr. & Mrs. Harry Frye
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Ray & Linda Campbell
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Cecil & Penny Washington

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Mr. & Mrs. Ron A. Yarbrough
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Mr. E. J. Trosclair
Ms. Mary Jane Gibson
Ms. Judy Duncan
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Goff
Dr. & Mrs. Albert S. Gooch, Jr.
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Mrs. Martha Gordon
Candy & Ken Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Rick Grant
Mr. & Mrs. John Hobbs
Dr. Glen and Marilyn Graves
Ms. Twila Rawson
Mrs. Charles Greer
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Kyzar
Mr. Paul Gunzelmann
Mr. Clark McNair
Mr. Steve Gunzelmann
Mr. Clark McNair
Dr. & Mrs. Bob Hanvey
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Ms. Debra Newman
Mr. Donald Harris
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Hart
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SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING

APRIL 29, 2014

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

The Baptist Children's Village has partnered with the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and Morrison Heights Baptist Church to provide SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING to help reduce the risk of child abuse in your communities.

Morrison Heights Baptist Church
A Family of Disciples
Christian Action

Event is free but registration is required. For more information call (601) 952-2422 or visit www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

Listen to Wisdom's Invitation • Proverbs 8:1-6, 17-21, 32-36; 9:12-18

I remember growing up as a child in Vicksburg, where there was a huge archway over the east end of Clay Street as you entered and left the city. That archway is now located over the entrance to the National Park. I remember the feelings I would get as we drove under the archway. If we were coming in I felt as if I was coming home, and if we were leaving town I felt I was missing something. Our lesson this week focuses on this very idea. In Proverbs 8:2, we see the Lady of Wisdom standing at the gate of the city, much like that archway. There seems to be no way we can miss seeing her, but I cannot tell you how many times we do because we are distracted by other things. We are faced with many moral choices every day, and while the immediate consequences seem appealing, the long-term consequence is death. God's wisdom is calling out to us to experience life as He intended it to be, and that life begins with our decision to trust Christ as our Savior.

Wisdom's Invitation (8:1-6)

There are many times in my life when I wish I had listened to the wise counsel of my parents and friends. If I had I would have not had to endure the consequences of my wrong decisions.

In this passage we are given a word picture of the wisdom of God, perched on an overlook, surveying the lives of all mankind. Wisdom is personified as a lady in this passage. She stands on her overlook and does not hide herself. Her invitation is to the inexperienced and foolish (v.5) to listen to her voice. Her invitation is very public, in broad daylight, which is in contrast to the invitation of folly. Her promise is life, not death, and her invitation is spiritual in nature. The life that she promises is life God's way, life that brings truth, righteousness, noble things, and salvation. For all mankind, her invitation is to accept the forgiveness that God offers us through His Son, Jesus. Her promise is that when we accept Him, God's wisdom will be given to us as we seek to live His way.



Explore the Bible

with Huey Dedmon

people into accepting the enticement of self-gratification. She wants to lure people into a life that says we do not need God's wisdom; we are self-sufficient. But as we see in verse 18, she and those who choose her way are headed for death, and total separation from God forever.

RSVP Required; Consequences Confirmed (8:17-21, 32-36; 9:18, 12)

The picture that these passages have painted for us is that God is not trying to hide Himself from us. Chapter 8:17 tells us that those who seek Him will find Him. The key is that we must seek Him. He has revealed Himself through scripture and through the saving work of Jesus on the cross. God is revealing to us that there is a choice we have to make. We can choose the Lady of Wisdom or the Woman of Folly. There is no third choice. It is His way or the world's way. One leads to a life of happiness, joy, contentment, and knowing we are loved by our creator. The other leads to a life bound by sin, its consequences, and spiritual death. I am not sure where you stand in making this important decision in your life, but God offers you the opportunity now to choose Him. He is reaching out to you right now. If He is speaking to you, I hope you will accept His invitation. It is really simple. You just admit that you are a sinner, ask Him for forgiveness, and believe in your heart that Jesus died on the cross and rose again for you.

Dedmon is Associate Pastor for Education and Outreach, Brandon Church, Brandon.

What We Work For • 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

Nothing that we possess truly belongs to us. God provides for His own so that our needs are met and so that we might use our blessings to encourage others. In our first lesson, we saw that work was good. Work was a major part of the plan and purpose of God for mankind. In the second lesson, we nailed down the true identity of our employer. We work as unto Christ, even though our paycheck is signed by human resources personnel. We work. We work as unto Christ. For what reason do we work?

God set the pattern for blessing through His covenant relationship with Abraham in chapter 12 of the book of Genesis. Abraham was blessed by God in order that he might also be a blessing to others. As much as I can understand from my study of the rest of the books of the Bible, God has never changed His mind about that issue. God entrusts us with gifts that are to be used wisely to meet our needs and also shared with others in need. When we do our best to provide for others unselfishly, we actually return the blessing to The Blesser. It all belongs to Him in the first place!

The fledgling churches in Judea needed help to survive. Paul was encouraging the church at Corinth to consider being a part of helping with that

need. Other churches in Macedonia were already giving. Paul desired to connect and cement the Gentile churches with the Jewish churches in gospel partnership. Strategically, he determined to use this situation to teach the Corinthian believers the value of work and being a blessing to others.

In our scripture passage, Paul addresses the Corinthians as "brethren." Earthly brothers stick together and stick up for each other. Believers should be known for that same kind of camaraderie. Now was the time for all Corinthians to come to the aid of their brothers. God graces us. We are to be channels of that grace. How in the world can "great affliction" plus "abundance of joy" plus "deep poverty" result in overflowing liberality in giving? Only by grace can that equation make sense. Macedonians gave that way.

The Macedonian churches had given according to their ability and even above and beyond their ability. In

fact, they begged for the opportunity to participate through giving. Somebody needed to tell them they were crazy to give that way. Yes, they were crazy alright: crazy in love with the Lord. They "gave themselves first" to God. That mindset makes all the difference because it originated as a heart set on pleasing God.

Like a dedicated instructor, Paul sought to encourage the Corinthians in

the areas in which they excelled. Their faith and their knowledge and their earnest love were commendable.

However, Paul wanted them to realize that dropping the GIVING ball greatly hindered all their other progress. Faith, knowledge, love and grateful grace-filled giving is a package deal that enhances and proves the walk of believers.

Leave it to Eager Beaver Paul to save the most convicting example for last. Verse 9 reads: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though

He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." Who can argue with the testimony of The One who lived a sacrificial life and died a sacrificial death? From the glory of Heaven to the glory of Earth, Jesus came to show us how to live and give. Do we get it? No, we don't. That is why God preserved the letter of Paul as a message for modern day Corinthians like us! This word is for you. This word is for me.

We would do well to recall the story of Zacchaeus, that wee little man in Luke 19 who climbed a tree in order to see Jesus. As he climbed down, he discovered that his priorities had been realigned with those of his Savior. Heart lines determine life lines. The poor widow in Luke 21 who gave "all she had" was commended by Jesus. She had already graduated from the Last Two Cents giving school. Her diploma read: He's My Master Degree. Her heart belonged to Jesus.

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Brown is staff evangelist at First Church, Richland

Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown

**ERLC**

cont. from p. 1

reconciles sinners like us to himself through the shed blood and the ongoing life of Jesus Christ."

The mission of Christians "is not to imprison and persecute

those who are walking contrary to the Scriptures, but instead our mission is to love and to persuade," Moore and Walker wrote. "Our mission is to be ambassadors of reconciliation — a mission that necessitates both defining sin and offering mercy (2 Cor. 5:18-19). That cannot be

done by coercion or threats of a police state, but only by the persuasive power of the conviction of the Holy Spirit."

Moore and Walker also said, "[T]he American 'spirituality' that pretends as though sexual immorality has no spiritual consequences isn't recogniz-

ably Christian at all. The jailing and execution of people for consensual sexual immorality, in contexts like we see in many places around the world, isn't Christian, either.

That's why the global Body of Christ should stand faithful both to a biblical vision of sexu-

ality and at the same time decry laws... that would mistreat homosexual persons."

The essay by Moore and Walker is available online at canonandculture.com/what-should-christians-think-of-governments-that-criminalize-homosexuality/.



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